

may be kind to the poor, that we may see that the poor do not suffer—that is a principle of our religion and we must live it—the poor shall not want and suffer while there is abundance in the Church. The Lord bless us and help us to understand our duties and do them, and be “loyal to the true and the right,” through Jesus Christ, Amen.

Mabel Poulton Kirk and the choir sang the hymn, “Beautiful Zion for me.”

ELDER BRIGHAM H. ROBERTS.

(Of the First Council of Seventy.)

I hold in my hand an excerpt from a recent number of the *Outlook*, of which Mr. Lyman Abbott, a religious teacher of great fame is the editor and also the publisher. In it he has a department in which he answers questions from those whom he calls “unknown friends,” and this question appears in that column:

“Have there been any prophets since Christ who add to the great prophecies which are of value to those who wish to know the truth; or is it sufficient to know the old prophets and the teachings of Christ?”

To this question Mr. Abbott makes the following answer:

“The prophets, we are told, spoke as they were moved, inspired, guided by the spirit of God. There is no reason to suppose that God has ceased to move upon the spirits of men and to inspire and guide them. Certainly there is nothing in the New Testament to warrant any such opinion. Peter expressly declares that the promise of the Holy Spirit is to all who will receive it, and Paul bids us pray that we may be filled with all fullness of God.”

To the second part of the question he answers:

“On the other hand there is no reason to suppose that anything has been added to the substantial truths

respecting God and His relations to His children, which are taught in the Old and New Testaments. Their teachings that God loves and serves and sacrifices Himself in love for His children leaves nothing beyond to be desired or even to be conceived. The prophets since that revelation are guided, not to add new truths, but to show how the truth of love, the love of God to man, and the love of man to God and to each other, is to be applied in all the changing situations and conditions of human life.”

I thought I would like to read that passage to this great multitude, because in some respects it does mark a forward movement in the conceptions of this religious teacher, at least, in regard to the principle of revelation. In the early history of our Church, the great novelty associated with it, and the wonder of its message, seemed to be that God had again spoken from the heavens; that angels had visited servants of God to restore the Gospel. This was the point at which our message was met by the religious teachers of those times with the claim that the volume of scripture was completed, and forever closed; that the awful voice of prophecy would no more be heard, that the last word of revelation had been spoken. In that controversy the early elders of the Church obtained an easy victory over their opponents; because it was so easy for them to do just what Mr. Lyman Abbott here does, namely, point to the fact that prophecy came not in olden times by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved upon by the Holy Ghost, and wherever that spirit is possessed there is the spirit of prophecy; and it was an inconsistency on the part of the Christian world to claim that they were in possession of the Holy Ghost and yet without the gift of

prophecy and of revelation. Consequently, I say, the victory of God's servants on that point was easily obtained. Mr. Abbott concedes the reasonableness of that argument, because he himself here uses it. But the astonishing thing in connection with this answer of his to the question submitted to him is, in the second part of it, *viz.*, that while admitting that the spirit of prophecy may still be upon the children of men, and there may be prophets among Christians, who possess that spirit, yet they may add nothing new to what has been revealed! It would be extremely interesting to point out to Mr. Abbott and those who think with him how great necessity there is for divine wisdom to be manifested in, and divine instructions given upon, every many vital religious questions. One might call his attention, for instance, to the fact that in the matter of the very ordinance by which men may be admitted into the Church of Christ—baptism—the formula to be used and the proper subjects of baptism, and the purpose of baptism—in respect of all this the Christian world seems not able to come to a unity of the faith. Evidently they constitute problems that may not be solved by the scholarship of the world, applied to the interpretation of the scriptures, either in the original language in which they were written or in the translations; for Christendom is hopelessly divided upon these subjects, and the world stands in need of the word of God to settle their disputes. I am happy to know that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which proclaims the reopening of the heavens and the restoration of the Gospel, with divine authority to administer its ordin-

ances, has a message to the world from God upon this subject of baptism; and that when the Lord restored that part of the Gospel, He fittingly did so by sending him who was known in earth-life pre-eminently as *The Baptist*, and he restored the authority to baptize, and he supervised the first baptisms in this dispensation of the fulness of times. That is one added truth that has been revealed by the Lord in this dispensation.

I might also call the attention of Mr. Abbott and those who think with him that in the important matter of administering the holy sacrament—the Lord's Supper—the means that God has established in his Church for the perpetuation—Latter-day Saints, mark it!—for the perpetuation of the spiritual life that he brings into existence through acceptance of the Gospel, they are—the Christian world—they are without the formula by which the emblems of our Lord's Supper may be fittingly and effectively consecrated to this great spiritual purpose. They know not how to administer the holy sacrament of the Lord's supper, for the perpetuation of the spiritual life of man. Through the Book of Mormon and in the Doctrine and Covenants, by the revelations we there have, something more is added to the religious truths by which men may be guided, *viz.*, the prayer for consecration of the holy sacrament.

It is not, however, for the purpose of referring to these matters, and many more that could be enumerated, did time permit, that I presented the answer of Mr. Abbott to the questions that I have read to you. I did not have baptism and the sacrament in mind, but this: He tells us that no added

truth to that which is contained in the Old and New Testaments in respect of God may be looked for, notwithstanding the admitted presence of the spirit of revelation among men; and I wanted to place this man's statement in contrast with the great truths that have been announced in this conference, by President Smith and President Penrose, as proof that a world of added knowledge, of intelligence, and understanding respecting God has been brought forth by the revelations of God to the great prophet of this new dispensation, Joseph Smith.

Two things confuse the world to-day in respect to their knowledge of God—the duty that some feel, on the one hand, to regard God as a personality; and on the other hand to regard Him as universal spirit, as everywhere present, and everywhere present with power. Reconciliation of the two conceptions is puzzling the theologians and the philosophers. Dean Mansel, in his great lecture, which amounts to a book, on the subject of "Limitations of Religious Thought," writes this as his conclusion: "It is our duty to think of God as personal, and it is our duty to believe that He is infinite;" although he confesses that there is something inconsistent with the two views. Herbert Spencer seizing upon this inconsistency of the dean's and commenting upon the conclusions, remarks: "Let those who can believe there is eternal war between our intellectual faculties and our moral obligations. I for one, admit no such radical vice in the constitution of things." Of course, when you speak of God as a person, especially if you regard Him as a person in the sense that He is an individual, of whom Jesus the Christ, as a resurrected, immortal, and all-glorious personage was

the full and complete manifestation—if you thus regard personality, then to think of God as everywhere present, diffused as a presence and a power through all His creations, there does appear a contradiction; because form means limitation in space, and the simplest philosophy teaches that a body, an object of form, bounded as it must be by certain lines, cannot at the same instant be present in two different places; that cannot be.

The scriptures do teach, however, these two things—about God, *viz.*, that God is a person of whom Jesus Christ is "the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person;" and they also teach the omnipresence, or everywhere-ness of God. David said when he contemplated perhaps—I know not—but perhaps, the desirability of getting away from the presence of God, because of his great sins; but in any event he was led to remark—and it is scripture, and it presents the truth:

"Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there. If I make my bed in hell, behold Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee."

Yet Mr. Gladstone, the great English statesman, like Dean Mansel, felt the need of holding to the conception of the personality of God. Indeed, he regarded it as the need of the world, and the hope of the future. Speaking of those questions to his friend, Mr. Stead, who asked him, a short time before

his death, what his greatest hope for the future of humanity was, the great statesman replied:

"I should say we must look for that to the maintenance of the faith in the invisible. That is the great hope of the future. It is the mainstay of civilization; and by that I mean a living faith in a personal God. I do not hold with streams of tendency; after sixty years of public life, I hold more strongly than ever to this conviction, deepened and strengthened by long experience, of the reality, and nearness, and personality of God."

But you observe that among these great minds there is a marked diversity of opinion concerning this great question, the necessity of holding to the faith of a personal God, and at the same time other men equally intellectual doubting the possibility of holding in consciousness and in faith the personality of God and at the same time His everywhereness. What a blessing that Prophet would be to his generation who should have his mind moved upon by the holy spirit, or who, by direct revelation and face to face communion with God, could come to the world with a word from the inner fact of things, and settle this question. Mr. Abbott needs it settled for him, as also other people need it settled for them. No human wisdom could find that word, but the inspired prophet of this new dispensation comes with a message that will settle it; a message that appeals to the understanding as well as to the emotions and the desires of men in their thirst for knowledge of God; and I may so far trespass upon your time as to read that brief message in which both great truths—the personality of God and the universality of His presence are maintained. Listen to this sweetest—no, I may not say that it is the sweetest

message, as it is difficult to tell which is the sweetest out of the many messages that God is sending forth to the world in this new dispensation; so perhaps I am not warranted in characterizing one as sweeter than another, but listen to this splendid message that our Church has for the world. Speaking of the Son of God, this revelation says:

"He that ascended up on high, as also He descended below all things; in that He comprehended all things, that He might be in all and through all things, the light of truth." That is, the power by which the truth is manifested. "Which truth shineth." That is, it is apparent, not hidden; it is before your vision. "Which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ." I pray you remember that phrase. "As also He" this light of Christ, "is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made.

"As also the light of the stars, and the power thereof by which they were made.

"And the earth also, and the power thereof; even the earth upon which you stand.

"And the light which now shineth, which giveth you light, is through Him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings."

The Apostle John speaks of it as "the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Job must have had it in mind when he said: "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of God giveth him understanding." But to continue with the revelation in the Doctrine and Covenants:

"Which is the same light that quickeneth your understanding;" and now the message, "which light," the creative power, world-sustaining power, intelligence-in-

spiring power—"which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space.

"The light which is in all things; which giveth life"—and therefore the vital force in the universe—"which giveth life to all things; which is the law by which all things are governed: even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things."

Now, my beloved brethren, with this great truth before you, it is easy to comprehend the great mystery that confuses the world, namely, how to hold in your consciousness, in your faith, the belief that God is a personality in the sense that He is a glorified individual such as the Christ was after His resurrection, and now is—an immortal personage. We know not, perhaps, on what bright sphere, as a personality He makes His home, but wherever He is, as a personality, the Christ, is as He left the earth—after His resurrection—He is as He will return to the earth, as set forth in the remarks of Elder Talmage at this conference. It is also possible at the same time to regard Him as a universal presence and power—which men rightly call God—proceeding forth from the personal presence of the Christ, also from the presence of God the Father, and from the presence of the Holy Spirit—there goes forth into the space depths, the Spirit which emanating from these Holy Personages fills the immensity of space with the very presence and power of God. That presence and power is constantly maintained, too, and is actual presence of God in all consciousness, in seeing, hearing, feeling, knowing, and loving. I say this presence called in the revelation I have read from "the light of Christ"—be-

cause it is of His nature, and strongly bears forth into space his attributes—this Spirit is actual presence of God; for as the ray of light is not separate from its source, so this Spirit and Power which proceeds from the presence of God is not separated from the personages of the Godhead whence He proceeds to fill the immensity of space. In this manner God in-dwells in his worlds, and those worlds in which God in-dwells shall fulfill and accomplish the purposes of God.

This is the immanent Deity of which men in our day have so much to say; and for our enlightenment—that we might know God—even the Spirit of God—though proceeding from the several Divine personages of the Godhead—is called "*the Light of Christ*," for the reason already given, and, further, that the Christ might be in very deed and in all respects the manifestation, or revelation of God to man.

I thought I would like to present this truth that attention might be called to the world's problem regarding the doctrine of God; and that the sermons of President Smith and President Penrose might stand as an answer to the sophistry and vain philosophy of the times about nothing being added by revelation to the world's knowledge of God. The Lord bless you. Amen.

To demonstrate the sweetness of tones of the remodeled great organ, Prof. John J. McClellan played variations of the music, now usually sung to the hymn, "O, my Father."

The choir sang the anthem, "The Heavens are telling the glory of God."

Elder Walter P. Monson pronounced the benediction.

Conference adjourned for six months.